

TRANSCRIPT OF AUDIOTAPE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

AIMS High School Graduation Date

FOCUS GROUP

PHOENIX, ARIZONA

March 14, 2001

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

THE MODERATOR: Good morning, friends,
and welcome.

PARTICIPANTS: Good morning.

THE MODERATOR: My name is Kavemuui. I
work for Arizona Department of Education as an
education program specialist. I work with the AIMS
test primarily. Lately I've been working closely with
the student resource and the reports. I have been with
the department now three, three years.

My role here is to moderate this
discussion, I would say, as the facilitator.

We are very pleased that you could make
it. We know how busy you all are. I met some of you
at the session last night, and we are very pleased that
you are willing to give your time and to guide the
Department and the Board in this issue.

The purpose of this session is to get
your views, and I would like to underline that, your
views, your input on the AIMS transition date. The
meeting is one of a series of activities to gather
public input. In January, a survey was sent to
educators, business leaders, community leaders,
parents, and the public at large.

This week, as I mentioned, meetings are taking place in Phoenix, Tucson, and Flagstaff. And in addition, we're holding three focus meetings to engage in a more in-depth discussion of some of the issues around AIMS as a transition test and when it should come into effect.

The participants in these focus groups are folks like yourself who represent a cross-section of community leaders.

I hope everyone has an agenda. We are scheduled to be here until 11:00 or 12:00. We might finish sooner. And that would be -- maybe that's hopeful, or not. But I'm sure folks appreciate time and have some other things to do.

The outcomes of this meeting, whatever the outcomes are, will be summarized and presented to the Board, along with input from the surveys and the public forums. In order to make sure that we capture what you're saying here, we are recording this discussion. Dr. Paul Young has a recorder, two recorders, in fact. Maybe he has three. And he will also take notes, and so will Judy Swanson from the Department of Education.

I will emphasize that your name will not be associated with any specific comment that you say

here, so please feel free to say what you want to say. Not that that would stop you from saying what you want to say. I think it's always a courtesy when you do this kind of thing. I hope everyone is comfortable with that.

Again, we want to hear your perspectives. I'll facilitate the meeting, Dr. Paul Young will take notes. This is your discussion, and you can take it whichever way you want within the framework of these two questions. We'll follow sort of an informal conversational format, try to make sure that everyone's voice is heard, and that we will have a productive dialogue.

Some housekeeping issues. We have a sign-in sheet here. I will pass that around. Most people have signed next to their names, some people have not. So please do that.

We have bathrooms right outside of this room, and some water fountains. Unfortunately, we cannot provide you with any refreshments, coffee, or sodas. It's just State rules. But we are generally hospitable folks.

Let's quickly go around the table and give each person a chance to tell us your name and what you do, just get to know each other a little bit.

(Introductions made.)

THE MODERATOR: Welcome all. We have provided you with a fact sheet -- it's a green sheet -- just to serve as a reference throughout the discussion, if you wish. Most of this affects our -- but if you can just take a few minutes and go through this and maybe see if you have very brief questions. But this is primarily a reference.

(Silence.)

THE MODERATOR: Okay. Any comments or questions from this fact sheet?

PARTICIPANT: I just had a question regarding the development of the standards. My question -- my memory is not serving me well this morning, but if I remember correctly, the standards were developed from the input of teachers, administrators, some community members, including parents, originally?

THE MODERATOR: Yes.

PARTICIPANT: And that's not come out (tape inaudible) teachers and administrators in Arizona?

THE MODERATOR: Yes.

PARTICIPANT: With a number of community forums.

THE MODERATOR: Yes.

PARTICIPANT: And several examples been sent to the schools, to students at the schools.

THE MODERATOR: I ask for comments.

PARTICIPANT: That started as early as 1995, I would assume, okay, the first forum.

PARTICIPANT: The teachers, though -- and I've been on it since day one -- we didn't have any input has to how the standards would be tested.

PARTICIPANT: That was the testing company?

PARTICIPANT: Exactly. Right. So it was just the standards.

PARTICIPANT: But it wasn't what was going to be tested.

PARTICIPANT: Right. Right. In fact, we specified that we would like to have some of those skills tested through writing, and they came out in multiple choice.

PARTICIPANT: There seems to be -- and I've been to a number of meetings now, including last night, and I've been to a number of other legislative meetings, listening to administrators, teachers, and, of course, students, talking about it. It is seldom brought out, the fact that the standards as (tape

inaudible) of all of the discussions or input of the administrators and teachers and so forth. And yet I hear administrators, teachers, and students say this is a grievously flawed test.

And that really kind of shocks me, what you just said, that it isn't, that the standards were set, but they're not testing it the same way that you had anticipated. So that would be one of the obvious causes for the friction that is going on.

And then perhaps the graduation requirement may also. I don't know whether that was discussed originally when the standards were set. But that's where most of the flack keeps coming up at this point, is the graduation requirement.

I've just heard hours and hours and hours of that flack, and I don't understand all of it, when it originated. I'm just curious.

THE MODERATOR: Let's -- we are at this point in the discussion where we look -- it might be good to talk about some of the history. So let's move into the main question, unless there are some clarification issues on that green sheet. Otherwise, I think this discussion (tape inaudible). Okay.

We'll frame the discussion in terms of these two questions. These are questions that

were sent to the whole world, if you will. What date would you recommend as the effective date for AIMS to be a graduation requirement for high school students? You may recommend different dates for the three sub-test (mathematics, reading and writing). Please explain why.

Second question is, in your opinion, what steps are necessary in your district/school to implement AIMS as a high school graduation requirement?

These questions came from the Board. The Board is by law required to adopt and administer a graduation test. We are at this point, now we are saying, well, how do you move on? How do you move from here? And this is what they are asking you to do. The questions are related. So maybe we'll start with these questions and then separate.

PARTICIPANT: I'm listening to what everybody is saying. Because there's so many unknowns over there. We don't know what kind of support we're going to get from the State. We don't know what the test will look like. We don't know what kind of teacher training might be coming up. We're pulling a number out of the air, 2001. You know, that's really vague when you don't know the answers.

PARTICIPANT: First what we have to

decide is, is the test really flawed as it has so been characterized. I don't know. I haven't seen the test, so I really can't direct myself to that. But that should be resolved. Are the standards correct? Is the test to the standards correct, or are they flawed?

MODERATOR: Right now, I'm just -- I think we also said (tape inaudible) perhaps we should reverse the order, and I'm listening to what people are saying. So, why don't you build on what he said, and let's move on.

PARTICIPANT: I agree with what he is saying there, that I don't think that we are fully aware of where we're at. By not knowing where we're at, we can't possibly know where we want to go or where we want to end up. And there's so many issues that are tied into this thing. You've got issues with regard to some employment issues with the teachers. You've got some financial issues with funding.

There's so many things that are tied up in the success of this test. I'm not all that confident in this test. And the problem, I think, with the test is simply doing, is simply reflecting on the other areas that we need to work on prior to mandating a date saying, okay, now you will pass this test at this time in order to receive your diploma.

If I took the test, would I pass it?
Probably not. If I took a driving test today, would I
pass it? I don't know. Probably not. And I've been
driving for some-odd years.

So, I think we need to stop, set aside
politics for a while. And I understand the
environment. The superintendent is operating here in a
political environment. She has to maneuver when the
elections are coming up in a couple years. But we need
to stop and take a look at where we're at.

This whole issue with regard to an
educational forum did not come up within a year or
within a month. It's been developing over a number of
years. So I don't see why we're all of a sudden
saying, let's try to solve this within one to two
years. It's obviously going to be an ongoing process
and will be long-term.

Let's look beyond the next election.
Let's go on. I agree with what he said. Let's look at
all the other issues involved. Let's solve those. And
I think once we figure out where we're at, we can say,
okay, how does AIMS relate to where we're at.

PARTICIPANT: I think the test is a
secondary issue. I think what we really need to be
talking about here is standards-based reform and the

implementation of standards based on instruction in schools.

To me, as a teacher, that way that it was implemented was backwards. Rather than giving a test to students who have not been exposed to standards-based instruction, and they have not, why not reverse it and start seeing how our standards-based instructions are being successful with the students who are actually receiving it in the schools?

About three years ago I did a training for teachers across the state, just involving them in the standards themselves, and I held up that standards book, that big white book that has all the standards in it. There were probably 50 people in there, 50 teachers from all across the state of Arizona -- and just to know, good teachers always assess prior knowledge. So I thought, let's find out where we are before I go on any further.

So I held up the book and I said, "How many of you have a copy of this or have seen a copy of this in your schools?" Four people raised their hands.

Now, it's really difficult to align the curriculum to standards when you don't have the standards. Now, I don't know. If I did that today, I probably would have a lot more hands going up because

we've become more aware of that. But that's the reality, whether you want to hear it or don't want to hear it. Okay?

So what we're talking about here is a systemic change, and it's going to take time. Standards-based reform is huge, and it's huge nationwide. It's not just huge here in Arizona.

So I think we need to get real about what we're talking about here. We're not talking about just a test. We're talking about aligning instruction so that students can be successful in whatever kind of assessment that we give them. But we cannot assess them on things that they have not been taught.

THE MODERATOR: Let's start with the second question, and all these things need attention.

PARTICIPANT: You want -- as I stated last night, I could give you a laundry list of those things that need to be taken again.

First and foremost, I think we need to take a look at the employment issues that you have here with the teaching staff. I think the new thing now is, let's pour some money in there, and I agree that teachers need to make more money, especially when I have bus drivers making 44 grand a year, and teachers making 10,000 -- 10, 15 less than that. There's

something seriously wrong in our system. So that's a good step.

However, money is not a key motivator. It's supporting your people. It's offering opportunities to your people. It's treating them with respect. And I'm not all that confident, in talking with teachers around the Valley here, that we are supporting our teachers here, not only from a parental standpoint, but from an administrator side.

I'm hearing teachers say, "Here's a problem child. I want him removed out of my class," and the principal is coming back saying, "No. No. No. He's going back to class."

Or this issue of, "This child has not met the standards, so I'm going to give him an F. He's flunking this class."

"No. No. No. You're going to pass him."

So they're not getting support from either end. We're dumping on these teachers from all ends. And the kids are certainly not helping out with the behavioral problems that we've seen in your classrooms.

So I think the process needs to start with change, and that's kind of a big issue. It's a

huge issue because it requires so many people.

I think we need to look at our financial resources. I think when we as a community are putting more importance on a stadium than our educational system, there is something seriously wrong. I think education should come first. I'd like to see some company step up to the plate and say, "Hey, let's have Bank One Elementary School." "Let's have America West Middle School," and fighting with the same passion that they did in raising that stadium. But I don't see it happening.

PARTICIPANT: (Tape inaudible) charter school. They did in my district, and what happened was, the district put the money in (tape inaudible).

PARTICIPANT: Is it still standing?

PARTICIPANT: Oh, it's still standing, but Intel put (tape inaudible). Once Intel was very generous (tape inaudible).

PARTICIPANT: I agree with him that there does need to be some change in instruction.

But I also agree that the test is flawed. And when you measure instruction with a test, even at the very beginning in the primary grades, with a flawed test, then the teacher has a problem with that. The students have problems with that. The test

itself, I believe, is flawed. I have no doubt.

PARTICIPANT: How is it flawed?

PARTICIPANT: Well, very specifically, the testing company has what I call "I got you" questions. They want to trick the students.

PARTICIPANT: As a parent, I will speak to that, not as corporate citizen, but as a parent.

They send home a booklet with my children to practice. And I looked at these questions, just from a 3rd grade level, and it's really hard to understand what they want. They're teaching a very specific way of thinking. And in some ways I agree it leads to (tape inaudible) really want me to tell them is this. I was very surprised at the way the questions were worded.

I'm very curious what measures were taken, and this has come from my background in quality and measuring a company against standards from the automotive industry. What validity measures were put in place to see, is this test even measuring what we want to find out from the standards, because the standards can be very different from the way you assess it.

And what I'm hearing is that maybe what needs to be put into place are measures that don't say

our children can or cannot graduate or get some kind of certificate, but for a while we have to pilot this and see, is it really measuring what we hope it's measuring.

PARTICIPANT: And measuring it at a basic level. There are ways of asking questions on some of the standards that can be high-level thinking, and there are ways of asking the question, the same standard questions, that can be at a very basic level.

And I think the testing committee or the testing company has too many high-level thinking questions that involve more than just the performance objective.

PARTICIPANT: That's not necessarily high-level to that skill. It's high level in a different way of logic and reasoning that isn't necessarily applied directed to that reading or writing or mathematics skills. You have a high-level skill within reading, writing, and mathematics which has nothing to do with a higher level of deductive reasoning and logic. It's testing something else.

PARTICIPANT: Going back to question No. 1, the underlying assumption of the character of the question is that it should be a requirement, which is hard to accept. So the assumption is rejected.

Over here in question No. 2, what steps, I go back to what you said. You have to just look at the data that you just shared with us, where it has 8th to 10th grade, looking at meets or exceeds. We still have, 10th grade, for example, 17 percent of math, and you can combine those two, 34 percent on math and spelling, and 68 percent of the students meet or exceed reading, writing, and math in those categories.

That should give us some feedback to look at the instrument or the instruction or the curriculum and have it done that way. We're looking at it as, when do we move on to establish (tape inaudible).

PARTICIPANT: I'd be curious to see those same scores, from either a teacher assessment or some other alternative method of assessing some standards, how do they compare. So, even though the AIMS test says that only 17 percent, how does the teacher assess their class according to their standards.

PARTICIPANT: Thank you. I'd like to comment on that. As far as assessments, there's a number of other approaches. I can come up with at least seven types of assessments that, you know, the AIMS only addresses one or two. If we're going to look

at this in a comprehensive way, all we're doing here is worst choice, short instructive responses, essay.

There's nothing on oral responses or reports. There's nothing on informal observation. Self-assessment, none of that is there.

PARTICIPANT: Are you saying the same should be (tape inaudible)?

PARTICIPANT: I would like to address that.

PARTICIPANT: If we're looking at this as a comprehensive instrument, let's broaden the scope.

PARTICIPANT: When you say self-assessment, what exactly are you talking about?

PARTICIPANT: The student should be able to know, what's the goal, what's the standard, and how close am I to that. Have some feedback that's timely, that's going to help me as a student learn what it is I'm supposed to be learning. But timeliness is not part of the AIMS either, as far as feedback.

PARTICIPANT: As well as, we know and assess their own performances, are going to know the targets they're shooting for. We should be able to know what a child is expected to know at each level, developmentally, and align their curriculum ahead of time to meet those standards.

I'm an outsider. I came here a year ago. I came from a state that is developing a test and are just a few steps ahead of Arizona, from the state of Washington. We have the TAAS's, all the little acronyms, and every state is trying to do it all on their own. I've always wondered, knowing what ACT and ETS could do, why we haven't leaned on those tests that already have the validity and reliability.

But, my bottom line here is, as soon as I got here and got in the middle of this, what I heard the Superintendent of Public Instruction, legislators, and other community members saying, but not the internal State (tape inaudible) is that whatever you're doing in the state right now is not valid. Your classroom evidences, your grades, your test scores that you're using to measure students' progress is not valid. You don't have quality assurances built in. Therefore, we don't trust those.

And we've broken down the trust, statewide and nationwide, and if we keep saying the only valid measure of whether a student should graduate is going to be a test, we're not going to get anywhere.

We need to go back and say, the credits the student earns, the classroom evidences by the grades that the student has are important, their

attendance is important, their behavior is important, the recommendations they get from the staff members, including the principal, is important.

And each student should have career and educational targets, which I think are more important than a test score, because if I'm going to hire somebody, I want to know where they're going to go and how they're going to get there and what their plan is and what the evidence has that they've been working in that way in the past.

I don't know if any employers at age 40 go back and say, I want to know what (tape inaudible), he says, "What were your SAT scores when you left high school? I want to know what your grade point was." What they want to know is what you can do and what your targets are for the future.

Those, to me, are more important, to get development in the systemic reform that is necessary, than test scores. Now, a test score can be included in that. That's fine. But it shouldn't be the focus of everything we're doing in the schools.

PARTICIPANT: I'm going to address No. 2 first. And then I have a few comments.

First of all, about two and a half, three years ago, I chaired a statewide parents advocacy

organization. I work for a hotline, so I get an opportunity to hear from parents all the time when they have problems within the schools. Essentially, what we do is we teach parents good union skills, how to work with, how to form good partnerships with their schools, how to be advocates for their kids in a positive and appropriate manner.

So I have an opportunity and a lot of experience hearing from parents saying, "I'm involved. I'm in the classroom. I help my kids with their homework, and my kid in 5th grade can't read. My kid in 8th grade can't read."

So, to address your issue about trust, trust is broken every time a student graduates from high school and is illiterate. And that happens in all our districts, not just those from low income. Kids are passed along from one grade level to the next, even though teachers know that a child or a student isn't ready to go on.

In some districts, they actually have to fight the administration to -- when the parents and the teachers are saying this kid is not ready, they have to fight their administration in order to retain that kid, because many school districts have adopted a policy of no retention.

So one of the things that I would do if I were (tape inaudible) is I would outlaw social promotion. Let those people who know the child, touch the child on a daily basis, decide whether or not they're ready to go on to the next grade.

Because what ends up happening is, the high school districts, those districts that are not a K-12 district, are not a unified district -- and I live in one of those areas. I live in Kyrene school district. We are K-8. We have absolutely no accountability. We have those kids for nine years, and by the time they go on to high school, poor Tempe Union High School District, my heart just aches for them, because they have four years to correct any of the problems that have existed up to that point.

So we need to do something about providing accountability for those school districts that are K-8, so that the high school districts don't have to remediate and do something that for nine years they didn't have control over, over the students.

The other thing is, regarding the ACT and the SAT, last year I worked as a researcher for a Washington, D.C., based company, and one of my clients was actually ETS. ETS is not a criterion-referenced exam. It is not based on, here's what all the teachers

and administrators in the state of Arizona say the kids should know by the time they graduate.

They test against a normed group. Well, depending on the year. I think we're now in year three or four -- three to five, let's say. We're testing against what three to five years ago were a normed group.

So, it's a different kind of testing, but definitely a piece of the puzzle that provides us an opportunity to compare us with other states so that we can see how our kids are doing in comparison. Comparison is not based upon, here is what kids are supposed to know. So it's a different kind of test.

So, I would do away with social promotion. I would provide some accountability for those districts that have the kids eight years, so that the high school districts at least know when they get the kids, they have some basic, that they have passed the 3rd, 5th, or 8th, whatever, point one, and they're not getting kids -- because we have kids coming into the high school district right now that can't read. And they're not all from homes that can't afford -- some of them, I know a few people that call our hotline who have tutors and are working on it now because they caught it late. It's a mess.

The last thing that I would tell you that I would do, in order to implement AIMS, is I would set about creating some remediation courses.

And here's what really disappoints me. Two and a half to three years ago I was in a meeting with a variety of State superintendents, the head of the teacher's association, the Governor, and Ms. Keegan. And at the point in time, 85 percent of the districts claimed that they aligned their curriculum with the State standards. 85 percent of them. This is two and a half to three years ago. I think it was three years ago this fall.

And there is a bottleneck effect at the district level when it comes to the information down to them. I was appalled by the fact that, when I was on the Kyrene board, how few of our teachers even knew that there were standards, or that there was a book that they should have that would tell them how they set up their standards. So there's a bottlenecking effect.

I'm disappointed that at this point in time, two and a half to three years later, after these superintendents had an opportunity to hear straight from the horse's mouth, the Governor, as well as Mrs. Keegan, yes, the standards are here, and yes, we're going to test to them, because all kids have a

right to be able to read and write and do math by the time they graduate from high school.

So why I'm disappointed is, I don't see a whole lot of districts stepping up to the plate and providing major amounts of remediation when it comes to kids that have been identified as not being able to pass the AIMS test in certain areas.

I can tell you, being the parent of a child in a district school, as well as a child in a charter school, there were a few kids in the charter schools that could not pass the AIMS test. They immediately had a remediation, individualized remediation plan for that child. Immediately. They're working to make sure that when they get the AIMS test the next time, they pass.

I'm not seeing that yet. I'm not hearing that yet. Maybe it's taking place in districts, but I'm not seeing the tests being used, not strictly just to measure what the kids know, but also as a diagnostic test.

That's what tests are for. That's what testing is for. That's what tests in education should be for, to diagnose where the child is. Okay. You find out where the child is, what are we going to do with them in order to get them up to par?

So I would provide some sort of remediation, and I'm very disappointed that I'm not hearing the districts are doing that.

THE MODERATOR: I want to just pause and see if there's anyone who hasn't had a chance to speak who wants to speak.

PARTICIPANT: I'm going to mention a couple things. I'm here as a parent. I haven't had a lot of exposure to a lot of the issues that many of you are familiar with, so you understand that the thing that brings me here is one of accountability, because I am totally frustrated with what I have experienced.

I have a senior, a person who is now entering high school that doesn't know how to read, but he will probably graduate this year. He can recognize words on a paper, but he cannot tell you what all of those things mean. But he will pass, and he'll get out of high school. And that irritates me beyond reason.

I have a child that's a junior, my youngest child, who is finally receiving an individualized education plan. He has been socially promoted because he's large. He's a good kid in a lot of ways, so all behavioral things are wonderful. But he's not learning. And even in the individualized education plan that he has, remedial education is not

what we're doing in the Deer Valley Unified School District.

It's been an issue. They want me to lower my standards or my expectations of what my child can do. I see him do a lot of intelligent things, but he is not being taught, or his academic experience is not being one that is positive. I'm frustrated by that.

How will we get there? I don't know. But I am hopeful that AIMS, that is going to be the standard or requirement for graduation so that my children cannot escape the high school or the school system without somebody being responsible for my child being able to leave that system and go and get a job and understand his function and his role in society.

That's what brings me here. But I've come to some understanding about what's frustrating, the nuances of administering that kind of situation.

PARTICIPANT: A couple of things, and I really represent a couple of perspectives. At the community college level we get all of those children who may not graduate from high school, a lot of children from charter schools and that kind of thing. I can't help but believe that there isn't some value at looking at graduated implementation.

You know, I also am very active in the business community. My job is to oversee occupational training for all of our colleges, and I'm in the community every day.

Part of what I hear is a great deal of frustration, because businesses, our economy is good. The challenge is that we also have a very low unemployment, which means that our companies are reaching much further into the labor pool. So part of the challenge (tape inaudible) now has is, how do we work with companies to provide training to assure that the employees they're reaching down to hire have basic skill issues.

We're currently working with the State of Arizona agencies, major companies, and smaller- and medium-sized companies. Every one of them talks about basic skill issues, the thought process, the thinking, you know, all of what we call the soft skills, the human skills, team building, showing up for work on time, all those kind of things.

And I think the frustration I hear is that there's a need to see progress. You know, I think there has been so much discussion about AIMS. And, you know, the great news is that we passed Prop 301, and there's new money going into all of our schools,

including the community colleges and universities.

I think the challenge is that, you know, I think making certain decisions about when you implement and that kind of thing. I agree with the issues of not having social progression in schools and some of those kinds of things.

The challenge is getting back to the curriculum. I was at Mesa for ten years, working with Mesa Community College, building a brand-new community college out in east Mesa, and I worked closely with the schools out there. And I think there's a great deal of frustration because there aren't any fallbacks for the children who don't graduate right now, other than they'll end up on our doorstep because parents don't feel it's important.

So I guess part of our concern is, you have to begin to grab hold somewhere. At some point the discussion has to stop, or the argument about do we or don't we, and I think the issues of curriculum and being able to help children at lower levels, and looking at what skills should they have before they even enter high school, then begin to turn some issues around. Because I think what the business community, I perceive, needs is hope that our children gradually over time, with certain kinds of changes, with the

investment of all of the money that is being infused in our schools now, is going to make a difference.

I think certainly the community colleges are concerned. We've entered the major debate with the universities about teacher preparation, you know. Part of our goal is really to attract more and more people to the teaching profession. And I think part of what we need is guidance from our schools to make sure that the curriculum we put in place to attract those who might not normally want to be teachers to look at it as an attractive vehicle.

We can help create that pipeline. I think, as we create curriculum to do that pipeline, we get it up through the college curriculum and into the teacher prep in the universities, that we have positioned them to understand the importance of the issues that all of you bring to bear.

But I think the issue of hope is kind of why we all voted yes on Prop 301. We wanted to give our schools hope. We know the fact that schools, our teachers aren't teaching them. I mean, I started as a high school teacher and coach. We've all been there.

But I do think it's critical that we deal with the issue of how we modify curriculum. Because all of us are owning the difficulty right now

of the last reading skills, basic skills, human soft skills, and if you don't make those modifications at the grade school level, and all the way through, if you don't relook at how children are entering high school, then it's always going to be a continuous vicious cycle.

But I do think at some point, the issue of timing and the debate probably has to stop, and you have to use all of this emotional energy we have to go about making these changes.

So, you know, I would encourage, in terms of date, that you have some graduated progress dates, for lack of a better way to put it, where you're beginning to see change, but maybe children haven't quite hit the mark on graduation, but you begin to see there's a shift in those and you have higher percentages in the kids who are in the approach category, perhaps a year or two late, or you have children who are finally at this category.

But I think you if see help and you see margin percentages of children getting results, then I think you're making progress, and I think the business community and all those will easily continue to support in increased sales tax and all that. But we've got to have some hope that the argument will stop and

progress will begin.

PARTICIPANT: I hate to throw in a -- I think there's one factor here we're missing here, and I'm going to change hats here from parent to a businessman, is the Hispanic community, and having two parents, both of whom are Mexican national. The testing, I don't think that we're properly preparing those students.

We're talking about English-speaking students primarily here and we're missing a big segment of our community, 25 percent of them, in fact, of kids who may or may not speak English, who may not be proficient in English that they speak, and that is a result of the parents not speaking English, at no fault of their own, simply due to the circumstances in which they're at. And I think we need to keep them in mind.

And I'm simply just throwing this out there so we all keep this in mind so that as we progress we remember them. Because whether we like it or not, we all like to think the Spanish population is basically just working in a fast food restaurant. Let's put them aside. They don't vote anyway. Let's forgot about them.

But they are key components of our economic growth here. They're a key component, and

they're only going to get bigger. And we need to keep this in mind when we're implementing tests, when we're doing educational reform. It's an issue.

So I'm throwing that all out there. We need to make sure that we're not only educating the children, but we're also setting aside some programs here that educate family as well.

And I understand that you offer the test in Spanish, but are we teaching these kids in such a manner? Whether it's English only or whatever, that's a debatable issue, and I'm not going to get into that.

Just make sure that we're teaching this segment of the population in such a manner so that they are prepared to take whatever exam is implemented at the time of graduation. This is one of the key reasons we have such a high drop-out rate among Hispanics, simply because at the lower grade levels there's a language barrier there, as well as the other issues of why they're failing.

We, as the Hispanic community, are failing. It's not because of the difficulty of the educational system. We need to keep that in mind because they, whether they succeed in school or not, they are going to have either a positive or negative impact, economically and socially, on our community.

THE MODERATOR: A number of issues that have been raised. I want to slow down this discussion such that perhaps it might be more helpful to the Board if we can tease out some of these issues by pointing to how can we do this, what we just talked about. What are some of the things that we can do, piece out some of those issues that have been brought up. What needs to be done?

PARTICIPANT: One of the things that we're doing is we're having English as a Second Language offered to the parents. Right now we're working with limited funds. We're offering it in the daytime and the mothers are taking a class and taking the work home. The fathers are now asking for it. They work all day long.

What we're finding is that the community as a whole is very eager to learn. They want to know how to get involved in the education process. They want to learn how to get involved in the political process. They want to learn how to manipulate within our community.

The problem is that there's an intimidation factor there. We're talking primarily about the parents who are undereducated coming from

Mexico, and there's an intimidation factor. And there's many barriers.

We need -- as an organization, the one I work for, we're trying to overcome that. We're educating the parents, where the resources are at, how to get involved. We're teaching them. We're, again, holding the classes, these English classes, to help them. So they're able to communicate with the teacher. They can say, "How is my young man or young lady doing in class?"

We help them with how to understand, how to read a report card, how to read and understand some of the letters that come home, because some of the teachers, in there limited resources that we have, aren't Spanish speaking. That's a hard thing to do.

I'm trying to find Spanish-speaking counselors, so I know very well that Spanish-speaking teachers are limited out there. But we need to look at educating them, at offering some Spanish classes to our teachers, and maybe offer some incentives.

But I think by opening up the doors we can meet each other halfway, rather than expecting one group or the other to come all the way across. I think that's going to help a lot. It's vital.

PARTICIPANT: I certainly agree with

what you're saying. It's a large, large program that needs to be done. My tutoring is all for Spanish-speaking kids. I'm not there because I'm Spanish speaking, but I'm there because they need that, those kids. So I understand exactly what you're talking about because the parents have to get involved.

That's a long, long program, and it has to be implemented and elevated beyond what it is. But I think that that's a huge thing. That's a question number 11. And I mean that. I think that's a vital thing we have to do in the population that we have.

But I want to comment on a number of things that have been said relative to the disappointment, I'll say, that you have in what is happening to our kids in school. This is a critical aspect of it, and I hope, and I have hoped all along, that this instrument to measure standards, which is proposed by the Department has two objectives.

Number one, to determine the progress against standards or toward standards that are being accomplished by the schools.

But number two, and I think we haven't talked about it at all, but I think must have been just as important an objective of the tests, is a means of measuring which schools are doing the job so that the

Department of Education can start taking legal action against those schools that are not being successful in what we're after.

Now, that's quite separate from high school graduation requirements. But it's vital, as far as the Department is concerned, to identify the schools that are not doing the job, doing as you've been talking about here. They are not doing it. So that's what the test should do. That's what the test is supposed to do.

I hope, in addition to, as it turns out, the means of doing that, of getting that evaluation, is a test at graduation. I have some concern about that and number two. But the Department must use this test to find out who isn't doing the job, and then taking the actions that it determines will be necessary to get the standards being taught and being successfully taught.

One little aside in answer to that is, as you have been doing 3, 5, and 8, and so forth, progressive in AIMS, or parts of AIMS, which don't involve graduation, one of the things that perhaps might be an interim thing would be to have to require, in order to know what they're doing, to have the test be at the end, the final test, be at the end of 10th

grade rather than at graduation, for reasons that you now have at least two years in high school to try to fix what you found out was grievously inadequate, rather than having it drop dead, saying "fail," he leaves school, and he has no opportunity to make those corrections. So maybe that's a nutty idea.

So maybe for a period of time until the whole standards are being properly taught, until that time it wouldn't be a graduation requirement. But perhaps you can do it at the end of the 10th year and have two years to try to fix it. That is my opinion, have it at the end of 10th grade.

THE MODERATOR: That's another topic.

PARTICIPANT: I'm just throwing out thoughts to think about.

PARTICIPANT: An addendum to what she was saying about the graduated timing, it was mentioned in our district by our math teachers, the graduation could be required four years after at least 80 percent of the 8th grade students have met the standards. Then we discuss talking about a graduation requirement. When the 8th grade standards are met at an 80 percent level statewide, then we're ready for the high schools.

THE MODERATOR: What's your thinking behind that?

PARTICIPANT: Well, when you look at the mathematics, grade 3 through 10, and you look at the percentages, they just get bigger and bigger and bigger. That's because the students are not ready to move on. They're not prepared for the additional concepts. They don't have what they need in 3rd grade. They move on to 5th grade.

PARTICIPANT: Standards-based instruction is a building process. If you look at the academic standards from kindergarten all the way up to proficiency, you will see that the students are expected to build upon their knowledge as they go through. It's not that they learn one thing in first grade and an entirely different thing in 3rd grade, and an entirely different thing in 5th grade. It's a building process. And if the instruction is provided to them in kindergarten, then we have the foundation to go on to the next piece of instruction.

The whole purpose of assessment is to inform instruction. It is not to give grades. It is to inform instruction. That is why we assess students, so we know if we are meeting their instructional needs. But if we don't have the foundation all the way up through, then it's not going to be possible for them to be as successful as they can be. The test is set up in

a very inferential way.

But that's a different way of instructing. It's not a way that a lot of teachers have been taught to instruct. So, a teacher development piece -- I'm not saying it's a wrong thing. I think that's a good thing. What we're doing now is we're preparing kids for jobs that we haven't even dreamed of yet.

PARTICIPANT: No, we're not. We're hoping to prepare them.

PARTICIPANT: We're trying to do that right now. So we have to teach kids how to think and how to use the information that we give them to apply to a different way.

That's what standards-based instruction is all about. I am a proponent of it. I believe that we actually have a set of standards that everybody needs to work towards so we all know what we're supposed to be doing. But we need support in that.

I want to come back to what you said. I agree there needs to be a remediation piece in there. But that takes a lot of support, and it takes money. Because you're talking about personnel if you're talking about that.

And our high schools in our district

have put in a remediation piece right into their next -- I mean, we're trying to get on board with this because we know kids need that support.

It's all about the kids, ladies and gentlemen. It's all about the kids. And when kids can't read, we need to have in place programs to intensely remediate. Not, "Well, I don't know what to do about it." You know? But that takes a lot of support, and that takes -- we're talking about systemic reform here.

PARTICIPANT: Intense remediation, the time it takes to do, takes away from the time the student has to fulfill these other graduation requirements they have for high school. I think sometimes we --

PARTICIPANT: We need to look at that too.

PARTICIPANT: That's right.

PARTICIPANT: It's a big, big issue. It's not just about this test.

THE MODERATOR: Are you saying that the other graduation requirements are not consistent with the requirements of the test?

PARTICIPANT: Well, if we can have kids that can't read and write --

PARTICIPANT: You don't want to water down and spend your whole time in high school remediating learning discrete skills at the expense of other more important skills.

PARTICIPANT: And I just want to add to number 2, that in your note, that staff development, I think, is a very huge key issue. Teachers can't, teachers don't. Well, we need to give them tools.

One of the ways we do that personally is, we have grading going on in the summertime, and that is a very attractive means of staff development. But here in Arizona, we take all those tools and we send them out of state. We take the test, and they're graded out of state. So there's absolutely no chance for any staff development to take place in our state. I would like us to rethink that.

PARTICIPANT: I don't understand what you just said.

PARTICIPANT: That is huge.

PARTICIPANT: The discussion is where we learn so much. As we look at papers and the whole process of evaluating writing --

PARTICIPANT: Can you explain what you said about it being sent out of state?

PARTICIPANT: The grading is not done

here.

PARTICIPANT: The grading of what?

PARTICIPANT: The grading of the test.

PARTICIPANT: The AIMS test?

PARTICIPANT: Right.

THE MODERATOR: Our test is flown out of state to score. She's saying it will be helpful in Arizona if we --

PARTICIPANT: It would quadruple what happens, because not only are our teachers understanding what is happening with the instruction, but also what the curriculum, as we develop it, interacting with each other, seeing what is taught and not taught, and see what is in the curriculum and not in the curriculum.

Then when we go back and prepare teachers to deliver their instructions that we should, now you can accelerate students. But now, not having that, we don't have that kind of interaction in staff development. It really makes a huge difference.

PARTICIPANT: You have to give teachers a chance to have conversation.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

PARTICIPANT: We don't really have effective content, in my opinion. You don't have

effective content limits to your teachers either.

PARTICIPANT: I think the whole issue there is to bring the making and grading of the test back to the education community.

THE MODERATOR: Let's stay on this point of staff development. Any other ideas we need to think about in terms of staff development?

PARTICIPANT: I'd really like to go back to something he said before and really emphasize that I think you were really accurate, is simply saying that what happened with the State legislature in 1995 and with the election of the superintendent, the governor, and all of those things at that time was, is that, yes, the legislature, at the urging of the superintendent of public instruction, took this out of the hands of school districts. That's really what happened.

When you think of it, it's from kind of like a power of political analysis. It really took this thing out of the hands of the school districts.

What has happened? Well, what's happened is that it's forced the issue. Whether you agree about the AIMS or whatever, I mean, if we look right up here, we've got the A.R.S. statute that says what it is. We're all here now because of this A.R.S. statute.

And it didn't just happen because of a bunch of whacked-out East Valley conservative Republicans. It happened because of a whole state looking at this and saying, "This is not working."

Now, when legislative remediation comes into the education thing, that's a very heavy-handed type of approach to all of this. But what it has done is that it has stimulated an awful lot of discussion on the part of professionals within the Department of Education and professionals within the administration, which I have tremendous respect for. My point is that it's forced the issue.

On the other hand, what have we done in the legislature here? Basically, the major goal of the Arizona legislature districts, A, to keep taxes low and cut deals for the parents.

So, you know, we're talking about fundings, we're talking about things. My point is that I think that where you're going and some of the other suggestions that we have here, yes, this is a long-term solution. But we've got a hammer over our heads right now, and that hammer is not going to go away. The hammer is absolutely there.

I believe that when we can really show that as districtwide, whether it's in small schools,

the charter level, or it's specialty schools, or whether in the district, that we can truly demonstrate that we're on board with this, you can call it hand-fisted or anything else approach to what we have, I think that that's where you're going to be in the point, is that you can almost start negotiating things.

I don't see -- I don't think it's reasonable for civilization to say that all people are going to graduate, you know, at this standard level at a hundred percent of people.

But I think that once the system gets to be fixed and that there are really consistent approaches going across the board, that if we want to say that we're -- I mean, we're being forced into this standards-based situation whether we like it or not.

And so, the point is that, yeah -- right here. ADA has a position of three different levels of standards for evaluation, you know, for work force, for business force -- I mean, labor force, a business force, and a college force.

Or what are you going to do with that student who is really doing well in your school and cannot pass that one portion of that AIMS test? You know, where are you going to go with all those anecdotal things that go against you.

And I'm just simply saying that my proposition is this. I think we're going to have to find a realistic date that's going to allow these standards things and yet doesn't take away the hammer. Because I don't think the public is going to allow that hammer to be taken away.

Even with all the things we've gone through, and the things that we've said, that the test is not adequate, it's not reliable, it's not valid or whatever, the point is that 60 percent of the public still supports the test, and 58-something, from what I saw in the last students -- parents who still have students in the public school system still support this.

And this thing has been hammered like crazy in the press and everything else. So it really speaks to the aspirations of what he was really talking about. So if the trust is not there, the hammer has got to be there, and I think everyone had some really strong suggestions.

The only thing that I would finally say is that if we're going to pick a date, we're going to have to stick with it. Because that credibility just keeps getting undermined. And yeah, it could be undermined because of problems with the test, problems

with the testing company, disputes between the State and the testing company, other things that right now I'm trying to figure out: are my sophomores going to be taking the math test this spring, are we doing another field test in the fall on the math thing. And, you know, we get kind of confused about this.

I'm not opposed to this test. And I'm not opposed to a graduation requirement. But I think it behooves us that we've got to come to the table saying that we've got a program, prepared to really meet this.

Tucson Unified is saying they're going for a hundred percent. And, you know, yeah, that's a crazy thing to say. But it really goes back to, that's what the statute says. And you can't get around the statute, unless enough people lobby, and okay, fine, we'll put it up for a vote, we'll do whatever.

I'm just simply saying that we need to deal with this plan. I think these people are really dead on with some ways in which we can do that.

THE MODERATOR: Let's talk about this issue of where we are. Perhaps we can move towards a reasonable (tape inaudible) at the State level.

PARTICIPANT: Well, curriculum alignment takes time. Like I said, I want to go on record as

saying I'm a supporter of standards-based instruction.
I want that said, be right up front.

But just handing people a set of standards and saying, "Go with God," that doesn't do it. That's not the way that they were instructed to teach. Most teachers were instructed to teach through textbooks, okay, and through teachers manuals. And that's the way they were instructed to teach while they were going through their education programs.

A textbook is a tool. It is not a curriculum. It is a means to teach to a curriculum. But that is a paradigm shift.

You have to understand, when we're talking about standards-based reform, we're talking about a shift in the way that we approach instruction.

So, what I've heard coming out here, and I wanted to stand on the table and jump up and down, but I used a little self-control here, is the professional development. Teachers need time. They need to be able to talk to each other. We have tremendous ideas.

Teachers are not opposed, really, to the reform movement. They're not opposed to accountability. They just need to have some time in order to move their curriculum where it needs to be.

I heard someone say, "Oh, yes, we're all aligned. We're all aligned." They think that they have a lot of times because they don't really know what that looks like. What they're looking at is, they're looking at what they've been doing and going out and seeing if they find standards and they can plug into that. That is not standards-based reform. What that is is doing the same thing you've been doing with a number in your book.

So what they need to be doing is learning how to look at standards and then go out to the body of curriculum that they have and figure out how to teach to those standards. Underneath each one of the concepts in the standards are performance objectives, and that tells us what kids need to know and be able to do.

So you need to align your instruction so that your assessment shows that the students can indeed do that in a variety of ways. That's a big thing right there.

So we really need to be starting with that, and we also need to be teaching teachers how to assess in different ways, and I'm talking about multiple forms of assessment. You're absolutely right. There are a whole lot of ways for teachers to assess

student progress besides one test.

If I was a 3rd grade teacher, taught all year long, and then I assessed my students' progress with one test and I never tested them at any other point throughout the year, what would your assessment of me as a teacher be? Not very good. Because I would not have been giving -- first of all, what did I say before? The whole point of assessment is to inform instruction.

So we need ongoing, multiple forms of assessment in order to know if you are on the right track with the students.

PARTICIPANT: With timely return.

PARTICIPANT: With timely return. And with doing something about it. If you get a student who gets a D or an F on something, you just say, "Oh, well, gosh, I guess they didn't do it."

THE MODERATOR: What do you say to the Department of Education?

PARTICIPANT: I want you to be realistic about our expectations, first of all. We need time to do this. I think we need to give our kids time, for one thing.

To go back to what I said about the standards being a building process and instruction and

learning and understanding the concepts of inferential information, then we need time to instruct kids and their capabilities, and they are able to be successful.

I don't think that it's fair to assess kids unless they've had a chance to go through school learning and being taught to standards.

PARTICIPANT: In high schools, we send them, and we're not unified, and we send them, and you say in high school, that's four years. Actually, we have a year and a half to do all those skills.

PARTICIPANT: Some of which they've never heard of.

PARTICIPANT: Exactly. And it's not fair. I've spoken with some who have attended and they think it's terribly unfair, and who can blame them, for a year and a half to learn all of those standards.

PARTICIPANT: I asked for a copy of the standards. Here's the problem. Here's a standard that's very reasonable. It says: Using reading strategies, making inferences and predictions, summarizing, paraphrasing, differentiating fact from opinion, and drawing conclusions and determining the purpose and perspective. That's what it says.

Here's a performance objective for grades 4 and 5: Distinguish fact from opinion.

If I'm a kindergarten teacher, I could do that. Is it raining outside? Is that a fact or is that an opinion? We can play around with that.

I go down the list to grades 6 and 8, performance objective 2: Distinguish fact from opinion. Are you beginning to feel the problem? There's no definition.

And you mentioned content. This is something that we don't do. Because the teacher can say, "Oh, yeah, I teach fact from opinion." But then if the question is, is the temperature outside over 70 degrees, the child could figure that out. These are 3rd graders. But if it says, is Bush's budget surplus figures accurate at 1.6 trillion? Is that fact or fiction?

You know, as a teacher, I could say my kids do well with that. But then the test comes out, and they don't know what it is, because there's no opportunity for the teachers to determine what's a fair objective. Which goes back to maybe grading them in state.

PARTICIPANT: Because if there was grading in state now, how do you teach this and what happens when this issue is in this district or this part of the state on different areas. Now all of

sudden it's changing that, or help our instructors understand. Here are some methods that we can use that can be much more effective in getting our students where they should be.

PARTICIPANT: This standard encourages a criteria reference test. It is not that easy. But the 3rd graders know and the 5th graders know what they're all going to work on.

THE MODERATOR: This is one way. Are there other ways that we can do that?

PARTICIPANT: I've got a question.

THE MODERATOR: Yes.

PARTICIPANT: You know, you made a really excellent point.

First of all, I know that the Department (tape inaudible) priority to standards. And again, when I asked -- when I was on the Kyrene school board, and I asked teachers, "Well, did you know that the Department has these classes that you can take regarding the standards?"

"No."

It was a bottleneck, again, at the district level regarding what kind of things are offered. So one of the things I would work on is making it very clear, not just at the district level

and expecting them to disseminate the information, but to the individual teachers, what is available to them in terms of right here regarding the standards.

But you said something that struck me as an ex-school board member, that gave me an idea, and that would be, you were talking about the way teachers are taught to teach based on textbooks. You're exactly right.

Again, when I was on the Kyrene school board, we lost teachers at a rate of over 10 percent. They wouldn't tell us how far over 10 percent per year. We had new teachers, at least 10 percent or more, new teachers coming into our system every year. I can't imagine what the rate of loss is in other districts. But I know that that was, to me, tremendous.

And I know that in a Motorola assembly line, if you had 10 percent of your employees leave in a year, heads would roll, you'd wonder what the heck is happening here. And that's not educating kids.

But it made me start to think. What if the Department worked with some companies to actually develop some new textbook and some textbook materials that would be based on our standards? In fact, I'm surprised that textbook companies haven't jumped on that already.

PARTICIPANT: I think they have.

PARTICIPANT: But specifically for our standards, so that at least there's a framework to work from. And if the Department were involved in doing that, then they can oversee that the quality was there and it's not just some company saying, "Oh, yeah, our textbook's based on your standards," but actually it was very in-depth for the grade level.

PARTICIPANT: Can I jump in here?

PARTICIPANT: Okay. But I get to go next.

PARTICIPANT: Regarding the fact that was said before, the textbooks per se are an excellent resource, but they're not just an end in and of themselves.

I mean, we have adopted, you know, in our math sequence the CORE math approach. You know, you go from integrated math or whatever. We've adopted the CORE math approach.

But we still find basically that one of the things that we miss in the CORE math approach is that it's fine to sit there and get them to conceptualize things, but I mean, we still have to build basics, make sure that those calculation skills are there. We still have to practice. Just, you know,

we're an art school. You've still got to do your scales. Those things have to be there. Not that they're an end to themselves.

But I'm just simply saying that no one source is going to be doing that. It's ultimately going to come down to the teacher in the classroom and what kind of resources are being there to take that teacher to the level that we were talking about and how are we going to march with those resources.

There's various things that are filtering around now. You know, there's the Milton TAF program, teacher something something program. And then ASU is using the Best program. There's a lot of things that are kind of flying out there that are kind of getting this approach, but we haven't developed any kind of system so that we can go back to the public with that hammer. That's what I'm talking about. That hammer is like -- and no one system is going to be able to do it. That's what I'm saying.

It's just like, I don't like the idea that the State has taken over the responsibility of districts, but the State is also saying, "We don't trust your districts to do this."

So we've got to find those things that we were talking about. The key thing is to get that

teacher in the classroom up to speed with what these standards are, because I don't think they're going to go away.

PARTICIPANT: One way to do that, though, is no textbook, no company to align those standards and make materials for use with teaches, and that is yet another form of staff development.

PARTICIPANT: I was mentioning, you know, the State has these classes they can go take. When they go, they go on their own time, which leaves their family out. They pay for their parking. They pay for everything. And Motorola doesn't treat their people quite like that.

PARTICIPANT: One of the additional things, this issue is, the paradigm shift is not only in terms of the standards, but in terms of the method of instruction. Algebra and geometry for all is a new thought --

PARTICIPANT: It's an incredibly radical idea that large amounts of the population are going to master those skills.

PARTICIPANT: But they can. They can. But it's going to take a totally different approach in the classroom for the teacher, and the teacher doesn't know how to do that, and needs that staff development.

It can be done. It's being done, but not everybody knows how to do it.

PARTICIPANT: It is being taught at the kindergarten level. They're teaching algebra in the elementary schools. They just don't call it that, and we don't tell the kids that's what it is. But by the time -- I mean, the standards instruction has that built into it, so by the time they get up there, it's not going to be, "What the heck is this?"

PARTICIPANT: Algebra is one of the kindergarten standards. It has to be.

PARTICIPANT: I mean, the standards are the same, you know, for all the areas. It's not like we have a whole separate set of math standards for kindergarten. The standard is right up there, and here are the different levels underneath the standards.

So, that's what I was talking about, about the building thing. Algebra and geometry are built in for all the different levels. So they can get there, but you have to give us a little time to get them there. Because today's 9th graders didn't get them necessarily.

PARTICIPANT: Couple things.

One of the things that you said a few minutes ago had to do with performance, percentage of

students actually meeting or exceeding the standards, and you mentioned 8th grade in particular, because for the high schools, we only have a year and a half to get those students up to par.

And so, if this is a requirement, making an exception for the assumption, but I'm not against the standard. I'm just looking at it as a graduation requirement, which I think doesn't do anything for us.

But if we were to just look at the percentage of students who successfully completed the 8th grade and then being able to address them, assessment drives instruction, informs instruction. It's not a voucher. It shouldn't end there.

The other thing that someone mentioned was the students who are acquiring English for the first time. The instrument needs to be made available in languages other than English, because it provides us all kinds of information for our students.

Who do they know? We don't know. At this point be comprehensive, and if this is going to be a high school graduation requirement, we should know what they know in their own language. It informs us.

Then we can provide the instruction and we know where to go from there. But we don't know that if they're not tested at the high school level in any

language other than English.

Curriculum needs to be aligned with standards assessment, staff development is essential, instrument needs to be available in languages other than English, professional literature needs to be provided.

And there's a document, a little document creating the will of the President's standards of educational excellence. It has seven recommendations there. They're not backing off this stuff. Grades, educational expectations of parents, students, and teachers, establish accountability provisions, provide professional development, communicate with the parents.

In some cases it has to be in writing. Coordinate schools' career opportunities so that there's something there. And support dual language curriculum. We're not doing that at the high school.

PARTICIPANT: There's a House bill right now that addresses those key issues. Unfortunately, what I'm hearing is that they're going to attach some noneducational issues to this bill in hopes to stall it.

But there is a very good bill in the House right now that's addressing those key issues

about accountability, about teacher development, about the minority population, not just the Hispanic but the Indian population as well.

It's addressing those, but our legislators, bless their little hearts, they're making this a political battle, and we have to fight to keep it out of that arena.

From what I'm hearing here, what we need to do is approach this whole issue here in a methodical manner. Maybe we need to take a look at starting at a 3rd grade level, and then after we get finished we take time off to study, okay, what happened, how did our kids do, how did our teachers do, how did the system overall react to this.

Let's take a look at what happened in that grade level. Then make the adjustments for the next grade level. Then the next year we have a better product. And then the next year we take a look at it again, and we have a better product.

Because we're assuming this is the best product that we can possibly produce, and maybe it's not. Maybe it needs some practical applications to it, but do it at the 3rd grade level where it's not mandated that the kids do not have to fail 3rd grade. So we can also take a look at how we can approve the

process, and teachers want to be involved in developing this test.

PARTICIPANT: Very much so.

PARTICIPANT: And let me tell you something. Don't fall in the same hole that our organization did. What we did is we implemented a computer system without the input of the clinicians who use the tool, and now we're having to spend enormous amounts of money having to redesign that communication system involving the clinicians.

I think that's what we're trying to do here. We have to be very careful with that.

THE MODERATOR: Let's try to think. All of this stuff that was said, as difficult as it might be to set a date, what might be a reasonable date?

PARTICIPANT: 2008, at least.

PARTICIPANT: I'd like to see 2010. That's when my son graduates. I'd like to see it then. I'm going to do my part.

My job, as a parent, my job has now become to assist that young man and teach him, and that's what I'm going to do. He's going to need to pass this, so that's my job.

And I think 2010, when he graduates, is a good year. I think it gives us the time to evaluate

the process, it gives time to evaluate the test, to get input from the teachers, to get input from the parents, and make adjustments as necessary, versus saying, "2002. We've got the best product out there. We're going to implement it right now."

PARTICIPANT: Actually, I'm beginning to feel rather optimistic, but as we speak more and more of the test, we're getting more and more narrow-minded, and I just want to reemphasize something that was said several times, and that is that we have to take a systems approach.

I would love to see the Department of Education have a -- all these discussions should be from a systems approach of, the AIMS test is one little thing.

I think we started the discussion first off this morning with, we can't answer this question until we answer this question because the time line is contingent upon what other pieces of the system need to be helped, reinforced, strengthened, changed, aligned, transformed. So then the piece actually has some significance.

But if we just talk about the test, well, we'll do it for the date. Yeah, let's make it 2010 and, boy, I hope we have a lot more further

discussion before we actually implement it in 2010.

I really think, also, there's the workplace skills standards that haven't been mentioned there. It's critical. Our company tries to preach that over and over again.

I actually chose a school for my children because these teachers, when I said, "Are you familiar with the Arizona revised skills standards?" they had it right there and they held them up, and they said yes. And they actually had an hour block in the middle school devoted to cognitive art, thinking skills. It's been wonderful.

It is a very emotional issue. Coming through school, I went to UCLA, and I always wanted to be a teacher. I loved kids. I worked with kids all the time. My mom used to say I ran group therapy on the playground in the 3rd grade. I always worked with other children.

And then when it came time, I got a degree in psychology and child education, and the school education, the graduate school of education of UCLA, was recruiting teachers. And we were in a similar situation that we are now. There was a desperate need for teachers. What do they do? They took that bar and they lowered it. They lowered it

down so it was ridiculous for me to even think about going into it because my qualifications were here.

So I entered the program for the two-year accelerated program where I could have gotten a master's and a teaching certificate out of it, and instead, on my third day in class, an academic counselor pulled me aside and said, "We need you right now. Will you please go down to the district office, take the test, take the NTE, and see if they'll put you in a classroom."

Now, I did that, and I passed with flying colors, and I was offered a classroom in one of the best, most desirable school districts up in the Laurel Canyon Heights -- I don't know if anybody knows the area. It was a very nice area in California -- without having gone through the program, and getting my emergency credentials.

And I would have made a very good teacher. I regret not having gone through the program. I did not accept their position because I decided instead I was going to get married and have kids. But when it came time to having to raise a family and support them, I constantly go through this battle of, I would love to be in the classroom.

But when you say money's not the only

motivator, it is probably the primary motivator. There is what we call the golden handcuffs of the corporate world. It is very appealing. And you're right, it's not just the money. But I'm making easily twice as much as I would be in the classroom. But my satisfaction is not what it probably would be.

Also, the hours for teachers are not what people, you know, think. My hours in the corporate world are a lot more flexible. I don't need to get a substitute if I don't show up for work. I don't have 30 little bodies waiting on me, depending on me every day. I don't have the stress of education. My professional development is paid for.

PARTICIPANT: There's this hammer that is hanging over our heads, and judging by the tone of all the meetings that we've had here, I agree with you. You want to start a movement to put this thing aside for another 20 years? I'll be standing next to you.

Unfortunately, we don't have that luxury at this point in time because of what's mandated here. So I think we're still looking for sometime in the near future to implement this, and just looking at a practical standpoint. I mean, obviously, next year, give me the best answer.

PARTICIPANT: Well, everyone's getting

back to the teacher, education, all of that. I also pulled my school children, both of them, from the Kyrene schools because they were literally being mistaught. So we do need to look at this.

I'm looking at the AIMS test. I described it to my daughter, who's in the 3rd grade. They're taking the AIMS test. It was saying it's not how well you're doing. They want to see how well the school is doing in teaching you the things you need to know. But I don't think that's always the case of how it's looked at to inform instruction.

Also, how to administer tests, I haven't heard that discussed at all as far as the skills needed. And I've just seen it myself. I took my kids to ASU to be tested. They took, I think, 200 students all at once. It's a two and a half hour test, and I was nervous thinking I would see all these kids coming out in tears. This was a qualified special program. Instead, these kids came out smiling. They were happy. I was going, what was their magic secret?

On the other hand, some were tested at school. They weren't told what the test was for, they did poorly, and they weren't motivated. And the teachers said, "Well, they should always be motivated."

You know, so there's a real difference.

There's so many pieces of the puzzle.

PARTICIPANT: That's fine. That's a systemic change.

THE MODERATOR: Let's try this date issue, -- anybody who has something? Ideas?

PARTICIPANT: Yeah. This is something that was evident last night, because the gentleman that was delivering that point was the same way, "Just give me a date, just give me a date." We can't do that.

PARTICIPANT: I just want to -- when you asked us to go to 1, that's when my hand went up, on No. 1, because I know you want some idea and guidance about the timing.

And I would just say to you that if the Board is so dispositioned to continue on this path, that instead of changing the dates, if they want to stay with those same dates, what they ought to look at doing is set a passing level at a level that is still, the kids come out at least literate, and then every year increment it up and set a time where they expect it to be fully -- the kids should be passing at a full level that they want them to pass it.

And I would not give that more than that time frame of ramping up of the grade, more than four

or five years. That's what I would do. That's one of the things.

I don't want to see AIMS postponed again. To me, it's the only hope we have to make sure that all kids at least get an education.

I want to tell you something. Until that meeting two and a half, three years ago where those people, those superintendents were in the room, it was apparent to me from the discussion that they had no -- they thought it was going away, so they hadn't passed on the information.

So if you change the date one more time, I think that's going to be a problem. Instead, start the passing level at a lower level and ramp it up over a four- or five-year period.

PARTICIPANT: Are you talking about lowering the standards?

PARTICIPANT: No. I'm just talking about the passing level. The same standards of the test. It would at least provide a basic literacy level of the first year.

PARTICIPANT: I don't want to lower standards. I want to give kids an opportunity to meet high standards.

PARTICIPANT: Yeah, but I don't think

she's changing the standards.

PARTICIPANT: Then I'm misunderstanding.

PARTICIPANT: I think part of what I'm hearing them say is that it gives you a graduated approach of getting the job done. So you never change the standards, you just have a lower acceptable level to get the kids graduated.

PARTICIPANT: Right. For the first year.

PARTICIPANT: As you're building your curriculum. Each year, as you're building your curriculum what they're doing is buying you time to get to that original passing level.

PARTICIPANT: Can I give an example?

PARTICIPANT: But I don't perceive it as changing the standards. I don't think anybody's saying that. It's just a matter of, how are we going to use the testing instrument as it relates to graduation.

PARTICIPANT: Right.

PARTICIPANT: So if you modify how you use the test and separate it from the standards and give yourself time to build your curriculum, to meet that top level of standard, then you're allowing children to move through the system while the faculty, you know, while all of your teachers are doing what

you've got to do.

I don't think you have the choice of an all or nothing, and part of what we're trying to get at is some kind of -- I don't want to say compromise because we're not -- I don't know that anyone is willing to compromise your standards. I agree with you in terms of how you want to approach that. I think it's a good approach.

I don't think you can do it all or nothing. You start with a time line or you wait until 2010. I agree, I don't think the community is going to wait. I think the hammer has to stay there.

But it kind of goes back to what I was saying before. If you give some hope and you gradually move up and you don't sway from it, because I agree, if you change it one more time -- you know, shoot, I worked with a school district on the east side and they were hoping it wasn't going to happen, you know. So, I agree. I think if you change it, then people are going to dismiss it and say, you know, we'll do what we think is right and appropriate, but it's not going to happen.

PARTICIPANT: So passing grade or score on the AIMS might be, and I'm just going to throw a number out, the first year, next year, might be you get a 50 percent, and then next year is 60 percent, and

then the next year it's -- and so each year you increment it up to what's passing.

PARTICIPANT: But you're still thinking about using it for a graduation requirement?

PARTICIPANT: I don't think that's ever going --

PARTICIPANT: At least one.

PARTICIPANT: Well, there's been one change in scoring, and correct me if I'm wrong here, but in the writing test, what happened was that they've changed the weight, in that the writing portion got more than the multiple choice.

Am I understanding that correctly?

PARTICIPANT: Compensatory model. Or are you having the prerequisite skills, the overall grammar, language, and also consider the essay?

PARTICIPANT: Now, the press just says you've made the test easier. The test hasn't changed at all.

PARTICIPANT: Right.

PARTICIPANT: It's still the same thing, right?

PARTICIPANT: I still don't agree that we should assess writing with multiple choice questions, for the record, please.

THE MODERATOR: I just wanted us to focus on the date issue.

PARTICIPANT: With the date in mind, probably for the same passion and the same reasons and with the same sense of mission about educating my children, I'm needing a date to happen real soon. I need something to be there and guarantee that my kids don't become a waste product.

So I guess the graduated standard is one. The graduation of that is one that at least assures me that something is going to happen by 2010. You have what you need for your child at that age. But mine, my kids are going to be out of this system, and I don't want them to escape this system without --

PARTICIPANT: They're not going to have -- if the passing score requirement is less than what it is now, then your children aren't going to know any more than they know now.

PARTICIPANT: Here's what I have. I have a standard in place that we are going to have to conform to, because right now you have people that still don't accept the fact that it is going to be required.

If you require it and that becomes a reality, then somebody has to start preparing themselves to reach that. That enables my child, who I probably will keep in the system, my youngest, for an additional year to make sure that he gets something. Other than that, if we don't have a standard in place at all, they're just going to let him go.

They're opposed to this whole situation in a lot of respects, and what I'm experiencing there, they're not anticipating that they're going to have to deal with it.

PARTICIPANT: Just so I understand, you're saying, don't wait until 2008, '9, '10, whatever it is. Leave it at 2004, but lower the bar down so that there will be some goal for your children?

PARTICIPANT: Sooner or later it needs to be there. I don't know when that's going to happen, and I'm looking for a date. Because for my love for my children, I want that to be as soon as possible for them to receive the benefits and not become a waste product.

At the same time, from what I'm hearing, there are some practical problems involved in getting that past them. There's more than just my children involved in getting to that standard. So I'm hearing

this as a possible solution.

PARTICIPANT: You postpone it, and I'll tell you what a lot of districts are going to do. They're going to say, "See, we don't have to do it."

PARTICIPANT: Yeah. Don't have to do it.

PARTICIPANT: But they still have to take the test, and the kids still have to pass it at some level, and each year it increments up. Then I'm not talking about the classroom teacher. The problem to me is at the district level because a lot -- not all districts, but districts like Deer Valley are saying, "You know what, we're going to get enough movement from people in the community to bust this. We're not going to have to even teach the skills."

PARTICIPANT: There's reason for them feeling that way. I've been in the educational system.

PARTICIPANT: Sure.

PARTICIPANT: I go back before that. That's Cues. Cues came first, and they've all just kind of fallen down. And so there's real good reason for that.

PARTICIPANT: I understand that. But it's been made very clear the six years --

PARTICIPANT: And I wouldn't be opposed

to this, but I'd want to be sure that the bar is where it is now, or higher.

PARTICIPANT: Right. Right.

PARTICIPANT: By at least 2010.

PARTICIPANT: That's a concern that we've had, is the infrastructure in place, to handle that 50 percent of the children do not graduate and are therefore held back.

It's not something that the children are going to continue in school. They'll drop out. They're not going to come back. And they won't have the employment requirement of even having a high school diploma to say, "I can step into your door because I have a high school diploma or a GED."

We're going to increase this population in the work force pool that doesn't have the credentials to walk into the door of employment.

PARTICIPANT: That's why a graduated system would work better than an all or nothing.

PARTICIPANT: Change must take place. It must. It's going to take time. We just can't next year say we'll satisfy you. We can't.

PARTICIPANT: If you're going to be looking at data and be driven by data, and I assume a lot of people in this room are, then all you need to do

is, you know, if you look at your test scores, you can see where we are already seeing progress.

What about considering that we have like a separate set of dates here? Because it looks like we're moving towards our kids meeting standards in reading and writing. But math is still a big issue. It's a very big issue, and we have to change a lot of things in our instruction in math.

Isn't it possible for us to consider high-stakes testing for reading and writing, possibly to have that graduation requirement, maybe 2004, 2005, and delay the graduation requirement for math until we have an opportunity to instruct these students in math?

PARTICIPANT: The math teachers.

PARTICIPANT: And the teachers in math skills until a later date, perhaps by 2008?

PARTICIPANT: I agree wholeheartedly, and I think that's a good approach.

But I need to say, they're not going to take it seriously unless it's for real. Unless it counts, they're not going to take it seriously.

The test also, the assessment process has to belong to the educator.

PARTICIPANT: Right.

PARTICIPANT: And the biggest area that

I feel that the corporate world could help us in is to assist and analyze the data and adjust the instruction we give to those kids.

Now, if you're a basketball coach, it doesn't matter whether your kids are short or tall or fast or slow. If you run the same offense and defense every year, you're going to get beat. And that is what's happened. When you teach by a textbook, that's what happens.

In our district we've taken every one of our AIMS and (tape inaudible) test scores and put them on a scattergram. Every teacher has every kid in their classroom, they can see vertically and horizontally where every kid is, and the grade level and the departments are sitting down and focusing on targets to improve for the next year. Not the whole playing field. Number sets maybe in the 5th grade level, everywhere we can. So we focus on the number sets.

And if you get the whole field in play, it is so oppressive to look at. So if you get them to start focusing on some disaggregated data to improve student learning and monitor and adjust and continue improvement throughout, they're going to hit the targets that we're after.

But we have to set a date, and I believe

the graduated date of reading, writing, and then math is the best way to go, but set the date and grade it and keep going.

PARTICIPANT: I was also thinking pretty much along the same lines. Different dates. Just looking at this here, 8th grade, 81 percent reading, 48 percent meeting or exceeding writing, and then math. In some districts it's lower than that.

I happen to be in a high school district with 13 school feeder schools coming into the high schools. That's Phoenix Union. And my particular feeder pattern, the percentages are lower. So, I would say 2006 for the reading and writing part. And math, 2010, 2008, whatever it is that is needed to set up that infrastructure, professional development, all of the things we talked about.

THE MODERATOR: It's five minutes before 11:00. Maybe in closing, if anyone wants to take a minute and maybe summarize what's the most important issue to consider in making this decision. Or any comment at all?

PARTICIPANT: I guess I still have a lot of trouble with a high-stakes test where I know that 30 percent of the kids in the state are not going to be ready in 2004, maybe not by 2006. And I think the

legislature is going to feel real good about telling the parents, but that's the way it goes.

I think there's a lot of things we could do. One that occurs to me, we talked about the school system that he works in. His problems are much more severe than mine. My kids pass at a pretty high level. So when I see the paper and the scores are there, I can smile and say, "Aren't we doing wonderful?"

I feel the frustration of people who work in schools where they have a real high level of students not passing. Perhaps it's time to look at differentiating support for schools where the scores are way off from being able to pass.

Pay the teachers more so that they'll stay. Because as soon as the teacher that's really good gets into that frustration and sees their school's not passing, they want to move. They want to move to my school. And so I end up with good teachers where the need is not the greatest.

And I think they need lower class sizes and higher pay in those kinds of schools. They would have a better chance of having kids achieve. Once again, I really think that setting it that way, give an honors diploma or a regent's test for kids that are college bound. Kids are going to need that high school

diploma.

PARTICIPANT: If I can take a minute.

THE MODERATOR: Okay.

PARTICIPANT: Very briefly. You were saying that, get it done. Get this thing going, because if it isn't going, then the schools or the students won't believe it's ever going to be, and it won't happen.

And you have an excellent idea, relevant to that which is quite subjective, in that the department or the districts, whoever makes the decision relative to what is passing, so this year it is 70 percent and next year it's 75 and whatever, I think gets the test done and still gives you time to get better and better and better at what you're about.

The standards haven't changed, but your very subjective ability to decide what's passing, this is available to you, and we can then move ahead. But we're not giving up the fact that you've got to start doing it. So that's it.

THE MODERATOR: Any closing thoughts?

PARTICIPANT: The success or failure of this is going to happen right over there and over there and right here, because the people who disseminate instruction to all the students is with the classroom

teacher.

So I guess I'd like to close by saying that we understand the dilemma. We are working very hard to close the gap, and we need your support. We need to know that everybody's on board with us.

There's no hidden agenda here or there's no conspiracy. We need time, we need development, and we need input from a lot of other people.

I think this has been a very positive procedure, and I appreciate the fact that I was invited to it. But I do hope that you've heard everything the three of us had to say.

PARTICIPANT: I think it not only goes with the teaching staff, but there's a partnership with the parents. I think we as parents need to evaluate where we have our priorities in life, whether it be career-oriented or with the youth. I think we need to take a look at ourselves internally.

But by the same token, just thinking about it, I would like to see also on the educational side, the schools educate the parents in the importance of being involved.

I know just in my experience, I mean, I had to go beat on the doors. I've offered them my cell phone number and basically everything except spending

the whole day down there to get information. And I ask the teacher and the principal, "How can I help you?" And that's been an ongoing chore. I've been literally up in their face on a weekly basis to get that information.

And so I would like -- and maybe that's an isolated case with one particular school. But I would like to see the hands extended at the same time because it is a partnership.

PARTICIPANT: You mean beside xeroxing and providing an extra thumb?

PARTICIPANT: Yeah.

PARTICIPANT: Sending a letter in a backpack and those types of things. I know with the class size and the parents, it's just difficult.

But there has to be some effort there. I as a parent am willing to make whatever effort possible to open myself up to dialogue with the educational staff. I would appreciate it if they would do the same for me. And I think that's one point.

Ultimately, whether there's a test, there's not a test, or there's reform, there's not reform is ultimately going to lie on the people who are in touch with that child, who have a hands-on relationship with that child.

PARTICIPANT: I would like to reiterate the notion of a need for support. Clearly, there is quite a bit of a need for support. And we should be able to look to the Arizona Department of Education for support as well.

The scenarios of what's possible, what's probable, and what's preferable, we need to find not a preferable scenario but one that will emerge if we continue with this requirement as it is.

The other thing is to look at what measures we can take to prevent certain things from happening such as that, such as a dropout possibility. Add that to what we have, some of the problem items are not developmentally preferable. They are just not -- kids aren't that dedicated. So that's another piece.

Another proactive piece would be to look at a more comprehensive perspective. When you have types of assessments that include a broader variety of ways to assess, the success of a more diverse population increases. So that's the other piece that we need to look at another.

I work at one of the high schools in this city with the highest concentration of minorities, of students that are having English for the first time. The AIMS doesn't address that. So we need to look at

developing an instrument that gives us some information about that population, so we can proceed with a more informed approach to what the instruction should be.

Thank you.

THE MODERATOR: Thank you very much for coming. This was a great discussion.

(End of tape.)

